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881 twice as much as would normally be consumed by the same number of people; and in addition they had large quantities of nuts, only exceptionally provided in ordinary life. For purposes of economy, the mother of the initiate usually makes porridge for her household of the bran of the stampings of the girls. Sometimes, in times of scarcity, a girl's puberty ceremony will be postponed, and it is noticeable that in the ploughing season, when the people are busy all day in the fields, there are few or no initiation ceremonies. Though in charge of the ceremony, the elder girls are subject to an old woman, 'mother of the *khobe*', who has been chosen by the initiate herself and who, ever after, will be called 'mother' by her. For her own mother may have nothing to do with the ceremony and, even though it is held in her courtyard, may not enter the hut of seclusion. The girl's mother feels very sympathetic towards her daughter and often grumbles that the girls are 'killing' her daughter when she hears them beating her. But she has no say. If a girl is unpopular, her parents sometimes arrange for the ceremony to be held at a relative's village in another area, lest she be too badly treated.

881 The Lovedu girl does not approach her own mother about such an
• 844 intimate and personal matter as her first menstruation, but confides in a friend, who will inform the mother by means of the metaphorical phrase, 'So-and-so has scolded the women.' The other girls of the area are thereupon called to come and the ceremonial opens with their carrying the novice on their backs from a spot outside the village, where they have forgathered, into the hut of seclusion, usually the cooking hut of the mother. Some girls keep the fact of their menstruation hidden for months before divulging the secret. Mabula waited for three months. It will not be possible here to do more than indicate the main incidents of a girl's puberty ceremony. It must, however, be borne in mind that there is considerable variation in detail between one ceremony and another and that no mere analysis can give the atmosphere prevailing in such ceremonies. On the arrival in her hut of seclusion the girl is 'strengthened' (*ku thusa*) by the old women. Ground herbs mixed with ochre and some of the girl's own menstrual blood are smeared on various parts of the body—in a circle round the wrist, on the head, nose, mouth, neck, arms, etc. The medicine is *ya ku ntsha bidzi mamala* (to give the zebra its stripes) and is said to prevent the girl from becoming ill (*ku khuma*) when entering the villages of other people. That night towards sunset the women of the area forgather at the village of the initiate, trilling and shouting, *'E a luma'* (it bites), on the way; they come to drum and dance, as they do almost every evening of the six days' seclusion.

881 While in seclusion the initiate and her companion sit to one side of the doorway of the hut without any covering except the loincloth. They talk in whispers only. When a stranger approaches the hut, she wails in a thin voice to warn him off (for she can see through the crevices of the doorway), and when the elder girls enter she must wail loudly lest she be beaten. When she wishes to relieve herself, she walks out completely covered in a blanket. Early each morning the initiate is taken to the river. She walks in a stooping attitude, covered in a blanket and surrounded by girls uttering a high-pitched wail as she goes. In the stream

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a hole is hollowed out so as to be deep enough for her to sit in (if possible 681
the water should reach the neck) while a fire is kindled for the other girls,
at whose pleasure she remains in the water, uttering her wail. If the girl
has a good friend among the old women, she may free the initiate from [431]
going to the river after the first morning by a gift of snuff to the elder
girls. This is called 'lifting the weight' from the girl (*ku rula*). They
return home about eleven o'clock in the morning, when they have their
meal. After this the elder girls return to their homes or do as they please,
while the novice and her friend remain in their hut. They sleep if they
can, for at night they get little chance to do so. During the initiation
the girl undergoes harsh treatment at the hands of the older girls. She
'pays', by being beaten, for going to sleep, for waking up and on the
slightest pretext. At night her blankets are taken away and used by the
older girls, while she lies exposed with no fire to warm her. Not only is
she allowed no relish with her porridge, but she may also be given filth
to eat. One girl's menstrual blood was put in her porridge, which she
immediately vomited up; sometimes a frog is given them to eat and one
of us has seen initiates made to eat sand as relish. If she asks for water,
the elder girls may clear the nose into it before it is given. All this harsh
treatment is looked upon as good discipline.

Initiation at puberty includes instruction in rules connected with 681
the new stage of life the girl is entering upon. She is warned that she 664
has reached maturity and must be careful, inger play with boys, to avoid
becoming pregnant. She is advised also not to have more than one lover
at a time, lest there be difficulty in establishing the paternity of her child
should she have one. In the old days she was at this stage given a
calabash doll which at her marriage was carried in a basket by the wedding
party. If she was not virgin, the calabash was pierced. This custom has,
however, fallen into disuse. The girl is taught the rules connected with
menstruation: not to enter a sick-room while menstruating, not to enter [841]
a cattle kraal, not to sleep with men during her menses. If she has not
enlarged her *labia minora* properly, she is severely scolded or punished
by having hot, roasted sesamum put on them. In one case the elder girls
inserted a mealie cob in an initiate to show her the dangers of intercourse,
hurting her so badly that she was unable to walk properly. Her parents
complained to the queen, who imposed a heavy fine on each of the elder
girls responsible. There is no teaching connected with marriage. An
initiate must be respectful to her elders: she is told that if people older
than herself are in a hut she must greet (*kuka*) on entering. She is taught
in a song to honour and obey her mother. Most of the teaching is in the
form of songs or mummeries. The dancing that takes place every night
when the women come consists largely of movements in a bent position 681
on the haunches, with arms held above the head for better balance. Some 535
of the dances are associated with the lessons of the initiation: two girls,
one with a cloth passed between the legs to represent the loin covering
of a man, dance facing each other; the 'man' dances with a lighted fire-
brand between the legs, the girl wears a cloth which makes her look
pregnant. Another dance consists of movements in which legs are held
close together, and sometimes crossed, symbolic of the manner in which

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is going.' It is, of course, an extempore prayer, not bound to any set words. After this rite there is no need to elope; it is *ku ruga*, to marry with proper rites, not *ku pala*, to run away surreptitiously. Yet the secret elopement by night is so interesting that it frequently follows, and in any case the slow journey of the troop of girls, who must be persuaded at every step, is always part of the ceremony.

The final stage of the marriage ceremonial consists of several successive steps lasting a month or longer. Again a whole series of new gifts (*mamusa*) passes and new rites are enacted. From early morning until late at night the bride's companions are busy—cooking, stamping mealies, bringing water for the inmates of the village to wash in, and in other ways. At night there are contests of riddles between the visiting girls and the boys and girls of the village; they are ordinary riddles (*dinhani*), not those curious *dinyelo* that end the initiations, but the pattern of the institution is the same. There is, for instance, the *ku nusa* of the girls at every turn and their exaggerated politeness. Then, after a week, having fetched wood and distributed among themselves the gifts received, the bride's companions go home, crawling out of the village and accompanied some way by the boys. The bride is now alone and, still in her finery, she begins to do the household work. When she menstruates for the first time, she secretly 'flows the moon' (*ku shuva mwedi*), running to an old woman, who takes her back with beer of 'showering the moon' and a goat is killed for her. This showering of the moon is a minor detail in marriage ceremonial, with rules and observances, however, in which the virginity of the bride, the part played by the go-between, the division of the beer and meat, the reciprocal duties of the *nomukhulu* and the *nafukulu*, the one giving beer, the other returning a goat, are once more emphasized.

But all the rites and ceremonies are equally full of meaning, not only for the purpose in hand, but for the whole social structure. About three or four weeks after the marriage the bride goes to her home with the goat or ox. of 'pouring out her bridehood' (*ku shudla vumpofi*), and thereafter, according to ideal standards, the bridegroom may exercise full marital rights. This 'pouring out', with its associated observances, is still universally carried out, though the couple may already have received permission to cohabit. If the bridegroom migrates to town, as sometimes happens, before the home-bringing of the bride, the breach of orthodox rules, implied by the premature permission, is avoided. After a while the bride returns and brings the beer to 'open the way' for her mother. In the old days the boy's people then sent the *ku hakela* goat, the goat 'of asking permission' for the consummation of the marriage. At the stage when permission to cohabit is given, the couple are ritually mixed, the ceremony varying from mutual inoculation to common steaming under a blanket: it is a rite pregnant with meaning and with the associations it acquires as being a part of many other ritual occasions. The bride becomes an apprentice to her mother-in-law, there are avoidances and gifts (*mamusa*) to remove them and so, at every stage, the marriage ceremonial is cut to the configuration of the social structure, fitted into its foundations and walls, and made to merge into the smallest details of its ornamentation.